

Why do people get so upset about change? After all, it's a fact of life in today's society where computers are outdated two months after they are introduced and automobiles change in value the minute they are taken out of the dealership?

Well, change is a part of life but it is also very difficult. And the more changes that we have to deal with simultaneously or one after the other, the more difficult it can become **for anyone**.

In organizations, it is important to focus on the emotional and psychological transition process that employees go through when there has been or will be organizational change and help identify some healthy ways to cope with those changes.

*"It's not so much that we're afraid of change, or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between we fear . . . It's like being in between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to."*

— M. Ferguson

In order to effectively deal with change, one must first understand what people generally experience when there is any kind of workplace change. Their emotional and behavioral responses are critical in developing a strategy for coping.

Remember that organizational change is a rational, well planned out process. Transition, however, is an emotional process; a reaction to change that is not necessarily time-limited or has a desired outcome. It is a process, not an event that follows a grief and loss model.

### STAGES OF CHANGE

- ◆ SHOCK/DENIAL/PANIC
- ◆ SELF-PRESERVATION/INSECURITY
- ◆ MOURNING/DEPRESSION
- ◆ RECOGNITION/RELUCTANT ACCEPTANCE
- ◆ ACCEPTANCE/GETTING OVER IT



### HOW TO COPE WITH CHANGE

- ◆ RECOGNIZING & ACCEPTING FEELINGS
- ◆ USING WHAT HAS HELPED YOU GET THROUGH PAST CHANGES
- ◆ MAINTAINING ROUTINES
- ◆ BASICS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT
- ◆ OPEN COMMUNICATION
- ◆ NOT COMPARING
- ◆ PATIENCE

### STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS OF CHANGE

- ◆ Explain why change is necessary and the context for change. **TELL THE TRUTH.**
- ◆ Listen, understand and empathize with your employee's feelings and concerns. **DON'T TRY & FIX IT OR TALK THEM OUT OF THEIR FEELINGS.** let the employee express him/herself.
- ◆ Observe employees' responses and note your own feelings of discomfort, taking care not to act in an angry or defensive manner.
- ◆ If you do not know the answers to certain questions, tell the employee that you will get them the answer or steer them to the person who can help them.
- ◆ Don't make any promises that you cannot keep.
- ◆ Keep employee informed of any new developments as they arise.
- ◆ Offer the employee the services of the **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**